

29 November 1948

Mr. Joseph S. Petersen, Jr.



Dear Mr. Petersen:

As indicated by Mr. C. J. Barry, Administrative Secretary to the Secretary of Defense, in his recent letter to you, your letter of 8 November 1948, addressed to the President, has been referred to this Agency.

We are most appreciative of your interest in the establishment of the most effective national intelligence system.

Sincerely,

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E. K. WRIGHT

Brigadier General, USA
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

DD
Director's file
Central Records --w/ basic correspondence.

NAME: PETERSEN, Joseph S., Jr.

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22 November 1948

Dear Mr. Petersen:

Your letter of 8 November to the President relative to your thoughts on the intelligence situation of the United States, has been referred to the Secretary of Defense.

The Secretary has asked me to thank you for your courtesy in having written to the President about this matter. He is, in turn, referring your letter to the Director of Central Intelligence for his information.

Sincerely yours,

/s/C. J. Barry

C. J. Barry
Administrative Secretary

Mr. Joseph S. Petersen, Jr.

[Redacted]

OSD:100:5:pt

NOTE FOR RECORD: Basic correspondence rec'd DCI 11/26/48. —
to Cen. Records 11/30

Copy: Director ✓
Deputy Director

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"Also Congratulates"

8 November 1948

President Harry S. Truman
U. S. Naval Base
Key West, Florida

Dear Mr. President:

In these days of universal starvation and suffering, of widespread fear and unrest, one is confronted with innumerable problems each apparently as important as the other in order of priority of needed solution. The usual method of approaching such problems is to consider first those with which one is most familiar, for then can one truly appreciate a given problem and arrive at a tenable solution.

One very important problem confronting you as Chief Executive is the formation of a real, functioning Intelligence Department. Before the passage of the "Armed Services Unification Act," the various intelligence departments--Army, Navy, State--were autonomous and a coordinating board attempted to issue directives to prevent unnecessary duplication of work, to allocate the various assignments, etc. This method failed miserably because the board was without authority to act and each department considered itself all important and so conducted itself accordingly.

After the "Unification Act" became law, a Central Intelligence Agency was established to direct and coordinate the work of all existing intelligence departments, although each department--Army, Navy, State--is, to all intents and purposes, still autonomous. CIA is merely a high level authority superimposed on the old departments. Civilian personnel change from either the CIA to Army, Navy or State, depending on which offers the higher grade--there is no standardization of positions or grades. In theory and on paper these things may not exist, but in practice they most certainly do.

The Military and Navy personnel are shifted about from desk to field, etc., depending on service needs. Also, there has been established an Army Security Agency for intelligence work, but this agency must borrow military personnel from Signal Corps, etc., as it has no existence within the present Army set-up.

Then, too, the director of CIA has been first an admiral, who remained in office about six months, then a general, who also remained some six months. Since then the directorship has been alternated between Army and Navy at short intervals. This is not very good policy, for in so short a time the poor director merely has time to have the desks moved about in his office. Also, the directorship is merely a part of the "tour of duty" for the officer, not his service job.

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One of the major parts of the intelligence problem is a director. He should be a civilian--with no Army, Navy or State ties--who will remain for some time and who has had some experience with intelligence work. For the director must build up a real Intelligence Department from the present groundwork to be worthy of the United States. What would have happened to the FBI if the director had been changed every six months? On the contrary, Mr. Hoover came in as director and built up the organization of which we are now so proud.

There are intelligence departments in the Army, Navy, and State Department, but these must be united into one department under one director to function properly. The Army men must be assigned by the Army to the Intelligence Department, likewise the Navy men and State Department men. We must have an Intelligence Department where members of each service work side by side for the welfare of the country. Further, by having three or four separate intelligence departments we are dividing the "talents" of the country. Each department must have "good people" in order to exist, so the various departments compete with each other to obtain competent personnel. One Intelligence Department would pool the personnel and the results would be startling.

Suppose, for example, when work began on atomic fission each service had established its own Atomic Fission Department? No matter how much money was available to all services, without a union of scientists and personnel under one director with full authority to act, the objective would never have been reached.

In this I have not mentioned duplication of work, of expenses, and the like, because with several independent organizations that is self-evident.

There is one argument against only one large Intelligence Department. If at any given time the Congress decides to abolish the Intelligence Department, it goes. But if there are departments in Army, Navy and State, they can exist "underground" by "padding" other departments' budgets. That is the argument always advanced by opponents of a united Intelligence Department. But it is improbable any Congress would abolish an Intelligence Department with the cry of "economy".

I earnestly trust you will give full consideration to the problem of a real Intelligence Department. The problem is of utmost importance to me since I am directly connected with it. Early in 1941, I gave up a teaching position at St. Louis University to join Army Intelligence as a civilian. And since I think that intelligence work during peace time is much more necessary than during war--for then one knows his enemies--I have remained with Army Intelligence. So after more than seven years with intelligence work under many administrators and many names, I feel that I must bring the problem of a true Intelligence Department to your attention.

And now, Mr. President, congratulations on your election to the Presidency. Also, please accept my heartfelt thanks for having won, for I had several wagers on the outcome, at great odds, and I have collected.

Thank you for any consideration you may give the problem of an Intelligence Department, and please accept my best wishes and prayers for a successful, peaceful administration.

Sincerely,

/s/ Joseph S. Petersen, Jr.

Joseph S. Petersen, Jr.

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